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ABSTRACT

Old-age policy in France has evolved historically in three critical dimensions that also correspond generally to post-World War II developments in France: the right to retirement (pensions); improved living conditions (e.g., autonomy, housing); and continued participation in the labor force. The last focus is currently a controversial one, given the high unemployment France is facing. Two fundamentally different systems of action have spawned these policies. One system sees social policy as compromises proposed by the state in disputes between labor and management. The other system of action sees social policy as the result of the dialectical relations between the state's administration and society. The present crisis, both of old-age policies and of the welfare state, represents a crisis of the rationale behind social interventions. Moreover, the contradictory nature of public interventions has blurred the very meaning of old age. Therefore, the very policies that have played a fundamental role in making old age a coherent and autonomous category are now breaking down the boundaries of this category. This breaking down of the category of aged persons might lead to the development of other ways of managing the relationships between old age and society. (KC)

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OLD AGE POLICY IN FRANCE

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THE ORGANIZATION AND ITS MISSION

The International Exchange Center on Gerontology is an organization of centers and programs for gerontological research and teaching in both public and private universities throughout Florida. The University of South Florida is the headquarters or "host institution" for the IECG. The Center is new, having received its permanent funding in 1982, and operates under a Director and an Advisory Board of representatives from the participating universities.

The purpose of the IECG is to make available to policymakers in the State the best information that can be secured on policies, programs, and services for the elderly. This means collecting and analyzing experiences in such areas as transportation, health care, income security, housing, social services, nutrition, and other subjects that have a significant meaning in the daily lives of our elderly citizens. To carry out this mission, the IECG must communicate with political leaders, program administrators, academic institutions, and with experts in gerontology throughout the United States and the world.

Special attention will be given to program innovations, and to experiences that reveal both strengths and weaknesses in various approaches that have been tried in addressing the aspirations and needs of the elderly. Careful and frank exchange of information, and thorough analysis of policies and programs by policymakers and specialists in higher education offer an opportunity for examination from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Florida has a unique opportunity for leadership in this field through the Center. Its concentration of elderly persons, and innovative programs like community care for the elderly, demonstrate the possibilities for both give-and-take of experiences. With assured continuing support, a small but highly qualified staff and faculty available in higher education throughout Florida, the IECG can develop a program that will greatly benefit all states. The pressures on state leadership to come up with wise decisions in human services is especially intense under the changing federal emphasis. The initiative is shifting more and more to the states, as federal funding is reduced. Useful information exchange will help state leadership to make increasingly difficult choices among competing priorities for limited funds.

Against the backdrop of a future which will feature exponential economic growth in the State, the influx of growing numbers of persons of working age, and the continuing increase in the number of persons over 60, Florida's policymakers need the best intellectual resources and insights that can be tapped. As a center for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information of this quality and depth, the higher education community can be of inestimable service to the political and administrative leadership of Florida. The IECG can serve as a vital link between the universities and colleges, and state and local governments.

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Foreword

The aging of populations in developed nations and the changing structure and composition of economies and families are among the many social forces that have moved those nations to confront problems of the status and well-being of older citizens as public policy issues. This essay, by Anne-Marie Guillemard of the University of Paris (and the Center for the Study of Social Movements), presents her own interpretation of the development of old-age policies in France. Professor Guillemard is among the pre-eminent social gerontologists of modern Europe. The International Exchange Center was fortunate enough to have her as a lecturer in March, 1985.

Whatever the origins of old-age policies at the governmental level, the implications discussed by Guillemard are relevant to more than France. Indeed, she cites data concerning the seven major member-countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development showing that retirement pensions alone constitute by far the major portion of national expenditures on social services. The United States is one of those major countries belonging to OECD.

The author's perspective includes a focus on three critical dimensions which also correspond generally to post-World War II developments in France: the right to retirement (pensions); improved living conditions (e.g., autonomy, housing, etc); and continued participation in the labor force. The latter focus is currently a controversial one, given the high unemployment

France is facing. As Guillemard expresses it, "Policies about the employment of ageing workers are no longer subordinate to the way-of-life policy. On the contrary, they have come into direct contradiction with this policy." Since integration is a major theme of the second dimension, encouraging workers to leave the mainstream of productive life as early as age 55 does seem to be contradictory.

This is only a sampling of the stimulating document that is presented here. Higher-level policy analysis is not too common in gerontology, and Dr. Guillemard's summary statement of her policy research should encourage a greater interest in that level of intellectual activity, here in the United States and elsewhere. Such activity must be recognized as an indispensable contribution to positive policymaking.

Harold L. Sheppard
Director

OLD AGE POLICY IN FRANCE

Anne-Marie Guillemard
University of Paris

The elderly in nearly all industrialized nations have become the beneficiaries of public social services. During the past four decades, old age has been "socialized". For a long time, it had been thought to be a matter for families or for the traditional system of providing relief to the poor. Nowadays, this phase of life has become a "social problem" that calls for clarifying options, deciding about programs and implementing appropriate public policies.

I would like to propose an interpretation of the social dynamics behind the making and developing of French old-age policies. The aim is to formulate two types of general conclusions out of knowledge about the social processes that, in France, have governed the evolution of old-age policies.

First of all, at the level of the conceptualization of the State's actions and of the social determinants of public policies, I would like to emphasize the implications of an attentive analysis of trends, over a period of forty years, in public actions within the field of ageing. I would like to draw attention to whether or not these trends have coincided with the actions and strategies of each social force.

In the second place, these results help us understand the mechanisms of the current crisis of the Welfare State in advanced industrialized

societies. Because the Welfare State is, in most cases, a Welfare State for the Elderly, the analysis of the development of old-age policies is particularly pertinent.¹

I. THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The general framework used herein to analyze old-age policies calls for a few remarks.

First of all, the intention, unlike that in many other studies about social policies, is not limited to reconstituting the decision-making process behind a specific public measure. Instead of a fragmentary approach, a full account has been given of the interactions between the ways that French society has provided for the elderly and the manner in which the reality of old age has been reconstructed. This comprehensive approach has been adopted not merely because of its exhaustiveness. It also follows a fundamental principle of analysis. In effect, how can the patterns of social relations, which underlie decisions in this policy area, be interpreted without analyzing, over time, all relevant argumentations of major actors? This condition must be met in order, on one hand, to observe how the focus of disputes has shifted and, on the other, to reconstitute the arguments between actors, each of whom has attempted to impose his definition of old-age policy and to shift the issues in accordance with his own interests and rationale.

¹For the seven major OECD countries (United States, Japan, West Germany, Canada, France, Italy and United Kingdom), retirement pensions make up, by far, the main portion - about 40% - of expenditures on social services. Next come health (23%) and education (20%); unemployment compensation equals a little more than 5%. The budget heading which has advanced the most structurally since 1960 is old age. It has risen by 9% - much more than the ageing of the concerned populations - whereas costs have gone up by only 2.4%, unemployment compensation by 5.8%, and family allowances have actually fallen off by 15%.

Here, my viewpoint is similar to that of symbolic interactionists in matters of social policies; I am interested in the ways in which a social policy comes out of negotiations.² In fact, it has to be met in order to open the way to understanding the social dynamics behind the making of public policy. "Old-age policy" has, therefore, been defined broadly. It refers to all public interventions that shape the relations between the elderly and society. This definition ensues from a deliberate decision: the refusal to lay down an a priori definition of old age and, at the same time, the desire to study the on-going processes that, in interaction with changes in the way care is provided, construct and reconstruct the social reality of old age. This broad definition entails a global approach that takes into account all major axes around which the State has organized its interventions in the relations between society and the elderly. This leads to a second remark.

These interventions have been organized around three major axes, which correspond to the fundamental issues that have shaped arguments about how old age should be managed. The first is the establishment and extension of the right to retirement. The second is the definition of a "way of life" for the elderly. Over this issue, actors have argued about the needs of this group and the ways to satisfy them. Out of this debate have come measures for improving living conditions by setting up health facilities, opening old-age homes and providing the services that help the elderly to continue living at home. The third issue has to do with how and how

²Cf. Carroll L. Estes, B.C. Edmonds. "Symbolic Interaction and Social Policy Analysis", Symbolic Interaction, vol. 4, no 1, Spring 1981; pp. 75-85.

much ageing workers can participate in the labor force. It is at the center of disputes and negotiations about employment policies.

Thirdly, this analysis has pursued two lines of inquiry. The one leads to asking how social policies are determined by the structure of antagonistic class relations. The other, closer to the sociology of organizations, sees, within such policies, the workings of the State as an organization. It raises questions about the relationship between State and Society and about the degree to which various branches (legislative, executive, administrative) of the former merge or diverge.³

Accordingly, this research has attempted to clearly separate two poles, State and Society, in order to discern in what ways a given public policy is related to each of them. This effort is, in my opinion, the only means for improving our understanding of the degree -- fluctuating as it does from one period to another -- to which the State is independent of or dependent on civil society. The underlying hypothesis is that interventions by the government in society reflect the interconnections -- continuously subject to strain and to change -- between the State and social forces.

These interventions are rooted in social relations, but they are also impelled by the dynamics of the State itself insofar as the latter is more or less independent of the actors who represent social classes.

The interpretation presented herein of the dynamics behind the adoption and development of French old-age policies is based upon empirical research over a period of nearly eight years. This research aimed at reconstructing the interplay of the social forces, whether pro or con, that

³For an extended discussion of the various theoretical approaches to the sociology of social policy, see chapter 2, in A.-M. Guillemand: La Vieillesse et l'Etat. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980. pp, 44-72.

have shaped this policy area. In short, solid evidence, though omitted from these pages, does back up the following compendious account of the processes that have led to French old-age policies.⁴ After the ways in which the State has managed old age since 1945 have been grounded in historical period, the system of action that have generated this management will be described. In the conclusion, conceptualization of the state's action and current crisis of the welfare state will be discussed.

II. THREE SUCCESSIVE PERIODS OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT OF OLD AGE

The sociological analysis of interventions, since 1944, by the French State in relations between society and the elderly has brought to light three successive ways in which old age has been managed. Each of these is characterized by the kind of interventions, and priority assigned to them by the State, along the forementioned axes -- retirement, employment and way-of-life issues.

A. The First Period: Retirement Was the Predominant Concern

Till the early 1960's, the government mainly intervened in old-age matters through retirement policy. This policy shaped most of its actions. Measures for improving the way of life and living conditions of the elderly were limited to public assistance, which offered relief from short-comings in the system of retirement that was being set up. Such measures sought to satisfy the most crying needs by providing lodging

⁴The complete results of this research are being published. This research was presented in a "Thèse d'Etat" by A.-M. Guillemard, Dynamique et crise des politiques de la vieillesse . Contribution à une sociologie des politiques sociales submitted at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, in March 1984.

or by dispensing assistance in cash or in kind through specially adopted programs.⁵ These were, however, subordinated to retirement policy. Likewise, there were no publicly adopted measures concerning ageing workers apart from the conditions laid down for retirement. Although labor was scarce and remained so till 1948, no public policy encouraged these workers to stay in the labor force. Only the pension plan indirectly affected employment inasmuch as it offered incentives for postponing retirement.

Two phases need to be pointed out within this period. Shortly after Liberation, public authorities set up Social Security (1945) and thus instituted a universal right to a pension upon retirement. This brief but intense phase of public involvement was followed by a duller one during which most of the State's interventions still, though with less commitment, occurred along the same axis. The institutions that had been created continued operating but idled. Old-age insurance under Social Security was not extended to fulfill the intentions of the 1945 act. Instead, it provided a minimal coverage. The least privileged elderly persons could obtain supplementary allowances from the National Solidarity Fund (established in 1956). The issue of retirement was being shifted farther and farther from the public domain to the bargaining tables around which labor and management sat. The principle of universal, national solidarity -- of coverage against the "old-age risk" for all working people -- tended to be reduced to the right to what we might

⁵ Among such programs were the establishment of a "social card" for underprivileged elderly persons (1949), allocations for covering the cost of rent hikes (1951) and special appropriations for the elderly who were not beneficiaries under any retirement program (1952).

call a "minimum-wage pension".

Meanwhile, special pension funds were proliferating and, consequently, "fragmenting" the right to retirement. Although old-age insurance under Social Security should have been -- in compliance with the 1945 founding principles -- extended to all workers, it, in fact, covered only those on wages or salary but not even all of them. In certain branches (mines, railways, electricity and gas), separate retirement funds had been maintained; and for self-employed professionals, others were created. Moreover, "supplementary" pension funds were set up at first for white-collars (1947) and later for other occupational categories. They offered benefits above the basic level under Social Security. The universal right to retirement was split up into as many pieces as there were funds.

B. The Second Period: Public Interventions Shifted to the Way-of-Life Issue

Starting in the early 1960's, the State once again became involved in the management of old age by intervening in the living conditions of the elderly. For the first time, measures along this way-of-life axis did more than to stretch out a safety net to provide relief to those persons who were not sustained by pensions. They, in fact, constituted a plan for reintegrating the elderly within society, for helping them to lead -- as long as possible -- normal and autonomous lives. Instead of, hastening the time when the aged lost autonomy and had to be taken into custody by institutions, the aim was to give them the opportunity to live independently as long as possible. This called for the construction of appropriate housing and for the extension of community-based facilities and services that this group of citizens needed in order to remain in

their homes. Old-age policy was reorganized around the way-of-life axis. Such was the meaning of the newly coined phrase "old-age policy".⁶ Subordinated to this axis, policies about the retirement and employment of aging workers had to contribute toward achieving the major goal of public interventions: the provision of an integrated way of life for senior citizens.

During this period, which lasted approximately from 1960 to 1975, the public management of old age completely changed focus. Interventions shifted from the retirement to the way-of-life issue. The ultimate goal was no longer simply to enlarge the right to rest and to replace wages with a pension. These were but one means for attaining the new policy objective of integration.

This shift of focus entailed a new definition of old age itself. No longer conceived to be retirement -- the right of a person to receive a pension while not working -- old age was considered to be a position, on the age-scale, that entitled persons to integration. The phrase *Troisième Age* -- Third Age -- was coined to express this change.

C. The Third Period: Toward Bipolarity

Since 1975, the management of old age has tended to be polarized, to be pulled along two of the three forementioned axes.

Along the way-of-life axis, public action in favor of integrating the elderly is clearly being reduced to a program for keeping them out

⁶The Study Commission of Old Age, created in 1960 by the Prime Minister, proposed a new approach to the problems of the elderly. It placed the way-of-life issue at the center of a coherent policy. This commission also coined the phrase "old-age policy" in the title of its report, which was submitted in 1962.

of institutions and at home. This "home-maintenance" program symbolized the State's first financial commitment to a policy of integration when it was adopted as part of the Sixth National Plan (1970-1975), but the very same program was included in the Seventh Plan (1976-1980) and has, since then, been affected by the prevailing ideas according to which social services should be curtailed during the economic recession. Government appropriations for this program have still been as small and experimental as under the Sixth Plan.⁷ In many respects, priority has been given to measures rich in symbolic value but easily controllable in terms of costs. As a consequence, the way-of-life issue has shaped, less and less, public old-age policies.

Along the labor-force participation axis, the management of ageing workers has become more and more important as a result of the recession and of the worsening unemployment. The government has gradually given up defending the right of the aged to work and has accepted, even encouraged, early retirement under the system of unemployment compensation.⁸ Policies about the employment of aging workers are no longer subordinate to the way-of-life policy. On the contrary, they have come into direct contradiction with this policy. The way that the State is managing old age has split up into contradictory actions.

⁷For a detailed analysis, see A.-M Guillemard. La Vieillesse et l'Etat. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980; pp. 99-131 and pp. 217-225.

⁸The degree of change in public policy can be seen by contrasting the government's clear-cut decisions, in 1971, for keeping older workers in the labor force before 65 with the recommendation, in March 1981, by the Minister of Labor that employers and employees should extend early retirement schemes to younger age-groups (55-60) and with the decision in 1982 to sign, with companies, "early retirement solidarity contracts" that would allow workers 55 years old or older to retire. See A.-M Guillemard. "La dynamique sociale des cessations anticipées d'activité", Travail et Emploi, 15, March 1983; pp. 15-32.

Aiming as they do at expelling ageing workers from the labor force, early retirement schemes have been superimposed upon measures for integrating the elderly within society. These programs do not proceed from the same logic. The government is torn between two policies. The one calls for "unemploying" ageing workers in order to share work according to a criterion of age; hence, the right of such workers to stay in the labor force has to be restricted. The other is a continuation of former programs that have sought to improve living conditions for the elderly and to promote integration. Policies about the labor force participation of the elderly have been undoing the way-of-life policy that was being implemented at the same time. Authorities have been forced to waste their energy as they use the way-of-life policy to fight against the exclusion and segregation that the "unemployment", or early retirement, policy has been producing and aggravating. The contradiction between these two poles of public involvement has plunged old-age policy into a crisis. Furthermore, these early retirement schemes based upon redundancy payments have distorted traditional retirement policy because the right to a pension has been transformed into the obligation to withdraw from the labor force, work has been forbidden, and the right to rest has become compulsory leisure.

III. THE TWO SYSTEMS OF ACTION BEHIND OLD-AGE POLICIES

After this description of the successive ways in which old age has been publicly managed, we need to look at the systems of action that have generated policies. The empirical analysis of the social determinants that make and change these policies has brought to light two fundamentally different systems of action.

A. Social Policy as Compromises, Proposed by the State, in Disputes between Labor and Management.

The one system of action is organized around the confrontation between the major forces in industrial society, management and labor. It is deeply implicated in the shaping of policies about retirement as well as about the labor participation of ageing workers. Here, measures are adopted as a result both of the complex relations -- disputes, negotiations and compromises -- between these two opposing forces and of the regulation and formulation of these relations by the State.

These parties have their own versions of old-age policy that they attempt to impose upon each other. They contend over the definition of basic issues. 1) As the organizer of production, employers seek to subordinate this policy area to manpower requirements, which vary with the business cycle. Their aim is to reduce management of the last phase of life to a factor that can be adjusted in order to manage the labor force itself according to the necessities of the production process. Depending on the business cycle, these can require controlling the mobility, stability and skills of labor. 2) In contrast, the unions continuously try to win acceptance of their version of old-age policy, which focuses upon the retirement issue. Their constant, almost exclusive, goal has been to consolidate and broaden the right of workers to rest and to be "disalienated" in the later years of life. Within this system of action, the State's role is to formulate compromises between these two opposing forces. The nature of these compromises, as thus formulated, depends upon the degree to which, at the time, the State is receptive to one or the other of these forces, which represent social classes.

Retirement policy prevailed as the means of managing old age during the first historical period because, between 1945 and 1947, the unions were powerful and the government was responsive to their interests. Just after World War II, employers as a group tended to be kept out of politics. Meanwhile, the State had to be reconstructed; its authority restored; and national unity reestablished. Because its autonomy was reduced, the State could not act independently upon Society but had to rely upon the predominant social forces in politics and in Society itself, particularly upon the working class as organized through unions and political parties. The interests of this class amply permeated the State through the three-party system, which dominated the Constituent Assemblies and held the reigns of government. However, the creation of a general retirement fund under Social Security in 1945 did not just enact this class's interests. It resulted from a compromise according to which, in exchange for the constitution of a Welfare State that would ensure an egalitarian redistribution of wealth, the bonds among members of the nation, as well as between them and their government, were renewed. Accordingly, all were to help in reconstructing the nation.

Throughout this period, the fluctuation of public retirement policy mostly came from the balance of power between management and unions and from the ability of these forces to sway the State. Thus, the right to retirement, as part of labor law, advanced when the unions were powerful or active; but when their influence upon Society or the State declined, no advances were made in extending this right, and retirement policy tended to be fragmented, as during the second phase of this first period. Starting in 1947, working class forces were retreating and a multitude of interests were being expressed by groups that belonged to the new and traditional

middle classes. So dependent upon the political system and its parties ' under the Fourth Republic, the government, pressured by these groups, split the universal right to retirement up into different programs, as we have seen.

The same system of action has come into play during the adoption of employment policies concerning aging workers. However, these policies result from a balance of power in favor of employers, who have been able to win over Society and the State to their version of old-age policy. The patterns of social relations underlying the third of the forementioned periods can be analyzed, as will be done, in like manner so as to throw light upon the combination of forces that have oriented the public management of old age toward the employment axis.

B. Social Policy as the Result of the Dialectical Relations between the State's Administration and Society

The second, entirely different, system of action has shaped policies related to the elderly way of life. Its dynamic has to do not with the opposition between forces representing social classes but rather with the dialectical relationship between the State's administration -- and Society. It centers around the intermediate groups that stand between the administration -- and society.⁹ The prevalence of way-of-life policies during the second historical period can be explained by the predominance of this system of action.

Such policies seem, on the basis of this research, to reflect not the class struggle but the State's ability to act upon Society. As stated

⁹These groups form what Pierre Grémion (Le Pouvoir périphérique, Paris: Le Seuil, 1976) has called "peri-bureaucratic links".

in the 1962 program advocated by a special commission set up by the Prime Minister (see note no. 6) the proposal for reshaping the relationship between the elderly and Society represented a new claim by the State upon Society. The State claimed to be able to act upon and reshape Society in conformity with "collective" objectives. The sudden appearance of this new argument for reorganizing intervention into an innovative way-of-life policy, which aimed at the social integration of the elderly, is to be understood in terms of changes in the relations between the State and Society. These changes occurred with the establishment of the Fifth Republic and the construction of a Gaullist State in which powers were more concentrated. The new institutions made the State freer from political parties. Also freer from interest groups, it had greater ability to undertake action because the administrative power and the government were, we might say, combined.¹⁰ The adoption of this innovative old-age policy can be related to the State's new freedom of action. The State redefined the basic issue in this policy area and thus also redefined its role in the management of the relations between the elderly and Society.

This new public program shifted the focus of debate from retirement to integration. It pointed out new ways of management in which the State could be more directly involved. Public actions were no longer confined to the economic sphere, to the transfer of income through pensions. They could take place outside retirement policy and beyond the influence of the forces behind it.

¹⁰ About the relative autonomy of the Gaullist State, see Pierre Birnbaum, Les Sommets de l'Etat. Paris: Le Seuil, 1977.

These measures did more than to regulate economic relations. They became social and political in nature and justified direct involvement by the State in Society. By supporting such a policy, the State bestowed a new citizenship upon the elderly who were no longer treated like under-privileged persons (to be held through relief programs) or former workers (to be paid through retirement funds), but like senior citizens with recognized rights to be integrated within Society. In turn, the State attained broader representativeness and greater legitimacy. Nonetheless, this new program would not have been more than yet another commission report had it not attracted and unified a set of dispersed actors who found, therein, a means both of becoming representative, either locally or nationally, and of extending their influence.

A complicated, limited system of fragile alliances backed this innovative way-of-life policy and provided a new social basis for public interventions. Among the major actors who entered into this alliance were elected city officials and professionals in the medical and social fields -- the physicians and social workers who, through these new programs, obtained the means for enhancing and opening up their professional activities. Various social-service associations hooked up to this alliance as they sought to renew their clienteles and reach out beyond the recipients of public relief.

Many of the supplementary retirement funds also joined with this alliance. Their competition had led them to foresee the new demands that were being formulated in the captive market which their beneficiaries made up. Furthermore, they wanted to underscore differences with the Social Security retirement funds.

These peripheral innovators soon became the intermediaries between the State's administration and its environment. The modernizing coalition that was developing within the State chose them as its representatives. They played a double role: as intercessors who helped the elderly attain recognition and as the supporters of the administration's activities. This joining of forces from the administration and from Society cast doubt upon the legitimacy of the traditional intermediaries, such as public assistance offices and charitable organizations, through whom relief came. The elderly way-of-life policy was related to the greater autonomy of the State's administration and to the support for this administration in Society. This new policy for integrating the elderly resulted from the complex interactions between an innovative technocratic plan -- conceived by an "activist" State that sought the means for directly intervening in old age -- and several local and professional actors -- who, for various reasons, had a common interest in advocating an alternative way to manage old age.

C. The Resurgence of Class Actors

During the most recent of the forementioned periods, the policy -- which has rapidly developed since 1975 -- of "unemploying" older workers has come into contradiction with the way-of-life policy. Although the latter has been prolonged, it is no longer the moving force that it used to be. It is being reduced to a single aspect, namely, maintaining the elderly in their homes through the provision of community-based services and facilities. The new way in which old age is being managed is related to the resurgence, in public decision-making, of actors who represent social classes.

The increasing importance attached to the employment axis for the management of old age reflects changes in the relations among social forces. These changes have favored employers and enabled them to win the State and Society over to their version of old-age policy, which thus becomes a means for managing the labor force. The creation and extension of early retirement schemes make these points quite clear.

Signed in March 1972 by employer and employee organizations, the first agreement for guaranteeing the income of elderly unemployed persons can be seen as a successful counter attack by management. It aimed at countering the strong union movement, which had been growing since 1970, in favor of lowering the age of retirement, a priority in labor disputes at that time.¹¹ The extension of measures of the sort contained in this agreement has, since then, quite literally resulted in massively unemploying older workers. A major step in this extension was the June 13, 1977, management-union agreement which granted "pre-retirement" not only to workers 60 years old or older who were to be dismissed but also to those who were to resign.¹²

The extension of such measures and the polarization of public interventions along two contradictory axes should not be taken to be

¹¹For a more detailed analysis of the interplay of social forces that has led to these measures, refer to A.-M. Guillemard, "La Dynamique sociale des Cessations anticipées d'activité", Travail et Emploi, 15, 1983; pp. 15-31.

¹²Persons in these two categories were guaranteed, under unemployment compensation, an income equal to 70% of their gross pay till the age of 65 when they would go on regular retirement.

the merely mechanical effect of worsened conditions in the labor market or of the recession. The underlying factors are much more complicated. They are of two sorts.

In the first place, as the presidency passed from Gaullists to Giscard d'Estaing, the State's freedom of action was lessened. There was a trend toward a neoliberalist State, which would not intervene as often or as systematically in economic or social affairs. The State handed some of its duties over to business, whose initiatives it intended to support or complete. As a consequence, the way-of-life policy lost impetus. Public authorities also left the question of ageing workers up to bargaining between employers and employees and, thereby, approved the extension of measures that eliminated these workers from the labor force. These changes meant that the State no longer subordinated decisions about employing ageing workers to the way-of-life policy. The latter no longer predominated as during the second period.

Secondly, the recession has affected social relations in two ways that have reinforced the foregoing factor. On one hand, management of the economy has been emphasized to the detriment of social transformations, such as the integration of the elderly. This shift of priorities has given more weight, in debates about old-age policy, to the arguments of business forces and of employers as the organizer of production. They have been able to win acceptance of their policy about older workers. This policy consists in reducing for each company the number of persons on wages or salary in a controlled but flexible way, namely, through arrangements that are negotiated following the usual procedures but then can be revised and adjusted as a function of the necessities of the

production process. On the other hand, the recession has simplified the issues in disputes between social classes. The unions have given up on their offensive for retirement and are making a defensive stand on employment. In unfavorable circumstances, they have chosen the lesser evil: to support employment for young people and accept the retirement of older workers. The 1971 union slogans for lowering the age of retirement ("retirement in an easy-chair, not in a casket") have been replaced by remarks such as "It's better to be retired than unemployed". The times have changed, and the unions have accepted restrictions on the right of the elderly to work. As a result of this simplification of issues, employers and unions have reached somewhat of an agreement for pushing older workers out of the labor force. This policy has been extended rapidly. In the meantime, the way-of-life policy has been watered down but prolonged because of its support in Society and in the State's administration. Public old-age policy is coming apart, splitting along two axes and entering a crisis.

The foregoing analysis of the determinants of public old-age policies in France has brought to light two distinct systems of action. Each of the ways in which old age has been managed during the three historical periods corresponds to a particular linkage between the State and social interests. The priority given to retirement policy during the first period resulted from the power of the unions within Society and from the receptiveness of the State to their interests. The predominance of the way-of-life policy during the second period reflected the State's greater freedom and its lessened receptiveness to social interests. The contradictory organization of public policy along two axes during the third period is evidence that

the recession has given employers more say in public policy and that the State's autonomy has been limited.

IV. Toward a Conceptualization of the Social Determinants of Public Policies

Attention must be drawn to the theoretical implications of this discovery of the joint presence of these two systems of action within the process for making decisions about public old-age policy.

These results lead us to object to any simplistic conception of public interventions. They show that the analysis of the social determinants of public policies require taking into account a number of causes. Such policies never merely reflect the class struggle, nor can their meaning be reduced to the autonomous operations of a bureaucratic machine above or beyond class relations. Public policies never completely coincide with the realities of the State or of social relations. Instead, they continuously reflect the kind of linkage, which is always subject to strain and to change, between these two realities. Observations in the field of old-age policy tend to prove that the State has no essence, in other words, that the State's actions can be analyzed neither as the autonomous dynamics of a machine nor as a simple means of social domination. From one period to another, as shown, the State's major interventions successively reflected the interests of the working class (in 1945 with the creation of Social Security), the interests of economic power-holders (early retirement schemes) and the degree of autonomy of an administrative machine and its technocracy (the adoption of a new way-of-life policy).

This research draws attention to the ever-changing, complicated nature of relations between State and Society. It casts doubt upon

any analysis that conceives of these relations in terms of total independence or of total fusion. On the contrary, they should be analyzed in terms of on-going interactions. Trends in public policies are a function of the systems of mediations through which social forces manage to influence the State.

V. THE CRISIS OF FRENCH OLD-AGE POLICIES: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND PROSPECTS

This analysis of public policies has yielded more than speculative knowledge. It can help us better understand the present-day crisis both of old-age policies and of the Welfare State.

The Mechanisms Involved in the Crisis of Old-Age Policies

Inasmuch as public interventions along the three axes of, old-age policy have reflected the balance of power and debates among various social actors, such measures tend to be fragmentary rather than coherent. They add up to bits and pieces, not to a whole. In this sense, there is no old-age policy. The only attempt to make one occurred during the 1960s; but since it did not receive the support it needed within society, its implementation ended in the application of a new program for helping the elderly to remain in their homes. This program was added on top of other programs rather than being used to link them into a coherent whole.

The foregoing analysis locates the origins of incoherencies in public interventions. These origins do not only lie in the poor functioning of the administrative machine; they also reside in the social dynamics through which interventions are generated. Rather than being part of an overall plan, old-age policies result from compromises between social forces. They ensue from logics that are distinct, even incompatible (as during the third period).

The crisis of old-age policy is, in the first place, a crisis of the rationale behind social interventions. This latter crisis has been putting an ever heavier financial overload upon the State, which is wasting its energy as it tries to repair the damage that other public measures have been producing further upstream in the life-span. This crisis goes along with a crisis of legitimacy since retirement itself is being called in question. This system of protection is no longer thought to be but a source of well-being and progress; it is also seen as a cause of rigidities and as a restriction on the freedom of choice since it is being forced upon rather than accepted by persons who are less and less old.

Moreover, the contradictory nature of public interventions has blurred the very meaning of old age. Owing, in particular, to the early retirement schemes, the number of phases in the later years of life is being thoughtlessly increased. The successive conceptions of old age, which correspond to the changing ways in which it has been managed, are being mixed up. The identity of this age group is less and less clearly defined by society. These persons are not really unemployed, not really retired. More and more often, they refuse the label "senior citizen". The boundaries of old age are becoming blurred, and there is a strained contrast between the images that these persons have of themselves and the images that society offers to them. In agreement with J. Habermas, I can conclude that the rationale crisis (owing to which the administrative system has been unable to reconcile diverse socio-economic exigencies) is being shifted toward the cultural system in what he has called a "motivation crisis".

According to this research, paradoxically, the very policies that have played a fundamental role in making old age a coherent and autonomous category are now breaking down the boundaries of this category. Beyond the present-day crisis of old-age policies, might this remark inspire some hope?

Might this breaking down of the category of aged persons not lead to the development of other ways for managing the relationships between old age and society? Might it not open the way to a type of management that, no longer restricted to the elderly, would take into account the whole life-span, hence all age-groups, and thus replace old-age policy by a policy of ageing?

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